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ST. DYMPHNA

Devotion

Franciscan Mission Associates

Box 598

Mount Vernon, N. Y. 10550

Dear Friend of St. Dymphna

As our divine Savior taught us, we must “watch and pray,” and “pray without ceasing” for the help we need to lead a Christian life. That is why our holy mother, the Church, encourages us to pray to and honor the saints. This devotion to our Lady, the angels and the saints more thoroughly enriches the supreme worship we give to God the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit. (Decree on the Church, VII, 51).

In praying to the saints we honor Christ, who is “crown of all the saints” We will also be inspired and enabled to imitate their virtues, and shall surely receive their powerful spiritual aid in our daily difficulties.

In honoring St. Dymphna by frequent use of this booklet, it is our hope that you will grow ever closer to Christ, the Lord. In your goodness please do not

forget to mention prayerfully also the needs of our Franciscan missions, and the intentions of your fellow associates.

With every blessing

L. Bernard, OFM

Director

Prayer of Preparation

It is you, great and all-powerful God, whom we worship in paying veneration to your saints. Our many sins and failings keep us ever conscious of our need for the help of the blessed in heaven. Their earthly lives give us reason to hope more firmly, to imitate their example more closely, and to seek their aid more confidently in our present trials. We ask the favor of your grace, most loving Father, in this novena of prayer in honor of St. Dymphna. Through Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*

NOVENA PRAYER TO ST. DYMPHNA

Dear St. Dymphna, I come to you daily during this novena to expose my wants and troubles. I firmly believe that your delicate charity will hear my plea for help.

You know the temporal and spiritual favors I need at this time. Look down graciously upon me and obtain these favors for me from God, the infinitely kind giver of all good things.

O blessed St. Dymphna, I trust in your protection to be preserved from all bodily and spiritual perils. May I be just and prudent, patient and strong, gentle and kind. From you I await inspiration and encouragement to pursue my vocation, to give glory to my Creator, and to win eternal salvation.

Be mindful of me especially in the dangers and needs of the present hour. Assist me during life and at the hour of death, that it may be well with me for everlasting years. *Amen.*

A Novena Note

On the nine pages that follow you will find suggested intentions, reflections, and prayers for each of the nine days.

There is, first, a suggested intention. Then, a verse from holy scripture connected to the day's theme. You may wish, if you have a Bible close at hand, to read a short extract from the inspired text, and reflect on it. Next comes a contemporary prayer. You may either use this prayer or address St. Dymphna in your own words. There is, finally, a practice proposed so that you may have chance to show by your actions that you want to live as you pray.

May St. Dymphna help you to persevere in your good intentions.

FIRST DAY

INTENTION: Holiness of Life

THOUGHT: Be filled with the Spirit. Ep 5 : 18

PRAYER: Dear St. Dymphna, I can't really say I want the title, "Saint," before my name. It will be enough if I get a toehold in heaven.

Yet, almighty God calls me to holiness. This is His will for me, that I become a saint. I'm ashamed to admit that I've given this too little serious thought. I've been content with half-measures.

But thanks be to God, there is yet time. My Maker still preserves the breath of life within me. Every heartbeat is a sign that He still wishes I shall become holy.

Remind me, dear Saint, that holiness is an inside thing: my soul's progress in Christ-likeness. Remind me that holiness calls for teamwork; God wants me to work together with Him. Finally, may I remember always that holiness is positive: to focus more on doing good than on not-doing evil.

Pray for me that I may be numbered among the Lord's saints forever. *Amen.*

PRACTICE: With God's grace and St. Dymphna's aid, try to do well some routine tasks of your place in life, especially some you may find particularly distasteful.

SECOND DAY

INTENTION: Love of God and Neighbor

THOUGHT: A man that does not love his brother that he can see, cannot love God whom he has never seen. Jn 4:20

PRAYER: Dear St. Dymphna, you are a special friend and intercessor in heaven. I am confident that you will heed my plea for growth in love of God and neighbor.

First, please help me to develop a deep, personal love for the Lord my God. May my love for Him endure in all moods and situations. Let me cling to Him no matter what He does or permits, what He gives or withdraws.

And, then, assist me in loving my fellowmen more sincerely. Obtain for me an understanding heart, filled with true compassion and concern for others. Let me never write anyone off because of human flaws or shortcomings. May I avoid being a burden to anyone, but always show myself willing to relieve the cares of other wayfarers on the journey of life.

I ask all these graces in the name of Jesus Christ, through whom all good things come.
Amen.

PRACTICE: We prove our love not in words alone, but in our daily actions. We can measure how well we love God by how we act to the person we most dislike.

THIRD DAY

INTENTION: Acceptance of God's Will

THOUGHT: Do not let your heart be troubled.
Jn 14:27

PRAYER: Dear St. Dymphna, I firmly believe that God holds our destinies in His hands. He arranges everything for our good here or hereafter. He presides at the sparrow's fall and over everything that happens to us.

And yet, I find it hard at times to accept His doings. When I face pain or sorrow, I'm inclined to question His will. I feel He ought to deal with me differently.

May I appeal to you, then, for help in accepting His will as a true Christian should? Teach me to welcome my Father's visitations no matter what the manner of His coming to me.

Show me how all the bits of life's jigsaw puzzle have God's signature on them, and how each falls into place. With your gracious help I shall give my Lord a free hand to arrange for my life's joyful and sorrowful mysteries. Then, after earth's exile, may I receive the reward promised those who do His holy will. *Amen.*

PRACTICE: God's will may sometimes strike us as harsh or puzzling. Accept His will as our peace. He who sees all knows what is best for us. Trust Him.

FOURTH DAY

INTENTION: Strong and Mature Faith

THOUGHT: Hold firmly on to what you already have. Rv 2:25

PRAYER: Here I am again, dear St. Dymphna, to present my needs to you. High on the list, as you know, is a strong and mature faith.

Ours are hectic times when confusion seems to be the normal thing. The faith of many is wavering and a loud chorus proclaims: "Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die and there is nothing beyond the grave."

Many are dismayed by the changes in the Church, the liturgy, and the presentation of religious truths. Some are afraid their faith may totally collapse.

My own faith should have greater strength and maturity. I need a powerful faith to carry me through the dark nights that hold no promise of a sunrise. A strong and adult faith will guide me like a beacon to a blessed eternity.

Intercede for me, dear St. Dymphna, that my faith may be firm. Then I shall take God at His word. I shall look to Him for guidance, and give less attention to noisy prophets of the day. May your faith be my inspiration, your prayers my constant source of help. *Amen.*

PRACTICE: All created things may fail us, those we trusted most may turn against us, but God is faithful. He will be your mainstay, your rock, your refuge in toil and trouble.

FIFTH DAY

INTENTION: Courage in Trials

THOUGHT: Courage! Do not be afraid.

Is. 35:4

PRAYER: Dear St. Dymphna, I plead with you today to share your courage with me.

You endured martyrdom in your early teens with courage that makes me blush when I recall my own cowardice. You never asked that life's pathway be made smooth. You walked forward bravely, your hand in God's hand.

I admit I've never quite managed to imitate you. When trouble hits, I look for a shoulder to cry on. I, who admire heroes, play the coward too often.

You, dear St. Dymphna, were made of sterner stuff. Your heroic example shows me how to say "yes" to God, no matter what He asks. When I compare my life to yours, the difference shames me deeply. When will I conduct myself with the fortitude so becoming in a follower of Christ?

Pray for me that it may be so. Your intercession will help me to meet every crisis with courage like yours. Then I shall show myself a true disciple of the Lord. *Amen.*

PRACTICE: Let not our Lord ever have to say to you, as He did to the Apostles, "Oh you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

SIXTH DAY

INTENTION: Relatives and Friends

THOUGHT: In life he has had the joy of his company. Si 30:41

PRAYER: Dear St. Dymphna, once more I greet you and thank you for your constant help. Today I should like to pray especially for my relatives and friends.

With all my faults and weak points, they must sometimes find it hard to be patient with me, to bear with my mannerisms and whatever else in me that may irritate them. Now, if only I were more lovable, my changed disposition would bring more sunshine into their lives.

God grant that this may be. It's urgent that I amend my faults that get on other's nerves.

Dear St. Dymphna, please pray to the Lord for my relatives and friends. Implore for them all the blessings they need. Keep a watchful eye on them during their earthly pilgrimage. With your constant aid they will have a safe journey through life, a blessed death in the Lord, and eternal joy with Him in the kingdom of heaven.
Amen.

PRACTICE: Be careful always to show your relatives and friends frequent evidence of your regard. Look for an opportunity to pay them honor, extol their virtues, and thank them.

SEVENTH DAY

INTENTION: Those who have Injured Us

THOUGHT: Love your enemies. Mt 5:44

PRAYER: Dear St. Dymphna, our Blessed Savior wants us to love our enemies, to do good to those who hate us, to pray for those who persecute us.

So far, the successes I have scored in these respects have been rather slight. Spiteful, unforgiving thoughts still come so easily to my mind. Sometimes I get grouchy and assume a cold air toward those who have been unkind to me. Airing my grievances is a habit with me.

You know, dear Saint, how far from perfect my conduct is. Please help me to improve, and remove resentment from my heart.

May the Lord bless those who have injured me, and direct them in the paths of holiness. May He hear your prayers for them, and bestow upon us all the graces we need.

This I ask for the honor of Christ, who forgave His enemies on the Cross. *Amen.*

PRACTICE: If we love only our friends, how are we any better than the heathens for even they do that? We prove our love for Christ by loving our enemies and doing good to them.

EIGHTH DAY

INTENTION: The Grace of Gratitude

THOUGHT: Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good. Ps 118:1

PRAYER: Dear St. Dymphna, I'm one of those who don't know how to say thanks to God. It's easy for me to recite my "gimme" prayers; but I am tongue-tied when the time comes to express my gratitude.

I take God's gifts for granted—when I should take them with gratitude! I hang on to the gifts and forget the giver. Yet gratitude should be a way of life for me. When will the remembrance of His goodness and mercy make my lips quick to praise?

Dear St. Dymphna, pray that I may remedy my lack of gratitude. Remind me to count my blessings. Let sincere appreciation be my special trait from this day forward.

Teach me to bless the Lord for the bitter and the sweet, for failure and success, for every material and spiritual good. Help me to make every day a time of glad and humble thanksgiving. May I rejoice in His gifts and use them for His glory. *Amen.*

PRACTICE: The word, "Eucharist," means thanksgiving. It is always good to give thanks to the Lord, and to all those through whom He helps us.

NINTH DAY

INTENTION: Peace in our Days

THOUGHT: For God is not the God of disorder but of peace. 1 Co 14:33

PRAYER: Dear St. Dymphna, the blessed days of "peace on earth" still elude us. God's children cannot get along together, and the world's game of guilt and blood continues. Justice, good will, and peace on an international scale are still lacking among men and nations.

There is much talk of peace. All peoples desire it. Millions endure agonies of body or spirit because of the effects of war. When will the world know unity, concord, and fraternal harmony?

Dear St. Dymphna, pray that we may do the works of peace. May our times of space exploration and lunar landings usher in an era of universal harmony and the peaceful development of peoples.

Pray with us all, dear martyr, that God may lead the world out of darkness into the bright light of peace. This I ask in the name of the Prince of Peace. *Amen.*

PRACTICE: Our best contribution to peace is to cultivate it first in our own hearts, our own homes, and to be peacemakers at our place of work, and in our own parish.



DAILY PRAYERS TO ST. DYMPHNA

Just for Today

Dear St. Dymphna, our world is full of people like me who cannot live one day at a time. Regrets about the past and fears for the future often spoil my joy in living today. Let me learn from you the lesson of living my life one day at a time.

As I start this new day I ask your assistance, dear St. Dymphna. Bring me up short when you see me about to spoil today by dragging all my yesterdays and tomorrows into it.

Almighty God, my Maker, has brought me to the beginning of this totally new twenty-four-hour period. Through your good prayers may He protect me by His power as I do His will today. May all my thoughts, words, and deeds win favor in His sight.

Pray for me, dear martyr-saint, that I may learn the important art of living one day at a time. *Amen.*



Before Mass

Dear St. Dymphna, we are here assembled

to celebrate the Eucharist and to worship the Lord our God.

We come together to commemorate the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. In the Eucharistic banquet He gives us the most intimate union with Him that is possible in this world.

Assist me through your powerful help that this Mass may leave its mark in my life. With your aid may I come to a true appreciation of the great privilege that is mine. Through this Eucharistic sacrifice and sacrament, let me grow in love for God and my fellowmen.

May I listen attentively to God's word, receive it reverently, and respond to it lovingly. Thus, serving Him faithfully, I may hope to share eternal joy with you in the heavenly city with Christ and all the saints. *Amen.*



Desire of Heavenly Things

Dear St. Dymphna, look graciously upon me from your blessed place in heavenly glory.

Where you are now, I aspire to be after the ending of this brief earthly life. I journey daily as a pilgrim toward my permanent home, but I should have a much stronger desire of heavenly things. Sometimes I am too content to live here forever.

Enable me, dear Saint, to measure the shortness of this life by the length of eternity. Make me appreciate that I am here only in passing. May my heart remain free, safely and surely anchored in the promise of Christ that He is preparing a place for me.

Inspire me with longing for my future home. May this thought give meaning and value to the trials and pleasures of earthly existence. May I

yearn for the place that awaits me, rejoicing daily that my pilgrimage gets ever shorter and heaven closer. Thus making myself familiar with this thought, I shall be better able to accept and sanctify the sorrows and joys of earth. *Amen.*



For a Happy Death

Dear St. Dymphna, God will probably not ask me, as He asked you, to endure martyrdom for His love. But I do know that, like all other mortals, I must die at a day and hour unknown to me. My promised land of heaven awaits me for an eternity of bliss in God's presence.

Do me the supreme favor of praying that my death may be happy and blessed. May it find me totally resigned to the divine will and confident that all will go well with me when I face God in judgment.

Remind me often that life ends not in death, but in resurrection. Let me remember always that Christ is our resurrection and our life. Help me to serve Him faithfully, to imitate His example, to make His principles and ideals my own. Then it will be a joy and privilege to leave this world and to go home to our Father. *Amen.*



For the Nervous and Emotionally Ill

Dear St. Dymphna, God has granted you special power for the relief and cure of persons with nervous or other emotional ills. Down the years you have assisted very many of them. Through your prayerful intervention, thousands have found blessed relief or a complete cure.

Today, your apostolate is no less intense. Many millions in our times are afflicted with nervousness and emotional disturbances. Have pity on them and pray to God for them. Take heed of their sufferings and, if it be His will, obtain speedy cure or relief.

May men of medicine and science improve their techniques and find new ones to benefit those who suffer. May all who bear such burdens of sorrow be blessed with serenity and peace, with lasting health of mind and body. This I ask in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. *Amen.*



Evening Prayer

Dear St. Dymphna, once again I greet you as nightfall marks the end of another day.

God has been most generous to me today as always. He watches over me and protects me from many unknown dangers. Thank Him for me, dear Saint, and ask Him to continue His kindness.

For your own gracious help in all my cares and problems, I thank you with all my heart. Forgive me if in the past I have not appreciated your help as I should have done. From this day forward I want to show myself more sincerely grateful to you.

Now that night is returning, I again ask your protection. Watch over me and shield me, by God's might, from all harm. Inspire me with a strong desire to serve God more faithfully tomorrow and all the days of my life. Be with me in my comings and goings, and may your blessing accompany me always. This I ask in the name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*



St. Dymphna's Story

The young girl-martyr to whom our prayers are addressed lived well over 1300 years ago.

It is only natural, then, to wonder why people still pray to her. Why does literature on St. Dymphna still find interested readers? Why do her name and fame endure after all these years?

The reason is simple; she is the patron of persons afflicted with nervous or mental disturbances. With emotional ills on the increase in our times, how desirable and providential that St. Dymphna should become better known and honored! Hopefully, this booklet will increase devotion to her.

Dymphna was the only child of a pagan king who is believed to have ruled a section of Ireland in the 7th Century. She was the very picture of her attractive young mother, a fact widely commented upon throughout the kingdom, but which, unfortunately, cost Dymphna her life.

When the queen died, the royal widower's heart remained beyond reach of comfort. His moody silences and persistent gloom soon pushed him to the verge of mental collapse. Finally, his courtiers suggested that he consider a second marriage. The king agreed on condition that his new bride should look exactly like his former one.

His envoys went far afield in search of the woman he desired. The quest proved fruitless. Then one of them had a brilliant idea: why shouldn't the king marry his daughter, the living likeness of her mother?

Repelled at first, the king then agreed. His compulsive need for a wife and his emotional turmoil made this extreme plausible.

So he broached the topic to his daughter.

Dymphna, appalled, stood firm as a rock. "Definitely not. If you had any decency, you wouldn't propose this union to me. You know I am a Christian. You cling to your heathen beliefs; at least allow me to live by my own convictions."

In succession the king tried flattery, pleading, entreaties; then, he reverted to threats, and swore to make her pay the penalty for her rash refusal.

To Dymphna it was all senseless. Never would she accede to her father's demand. Eventually she won his consent for a delay of forty days. During this interval she conferred with Father Gerebern, her confessor, who cautioned her to keep her distance. After giving the matter further thought, he counselled her to flee the palace.

Shortly afterwards the group of four set out—Father Gerebern, Dymphna, the court jester and his wife—with loyal vassals rowing them across the sea. On landing at Antwerp, on the coast of Belgium, they looked around for a residence. In the little village of Gheel, they settled near a shrine dedicated to St. Martin of Tours.

There Dymphna soon endeared herself to the local people by her kindness. For three months she walked among them like an angel of mercy.

Then spies from her native land arrived in Gheel and paid their inn fees with coins similar to those Dymphna had often handed to the innkeeper. Unaware that the men were spies, he innocently revealed to them where she lived.



The king came at once to Gheel for the final, tragic encounter. Despite his inner fury, he managed to control his anger. Again he coaxed, pleaded, made glowing promises of money and prestige. When this approach failed, he tried threats and insults, but these too left Dymphna unmoved. She would rather die than break the vow of virginity she had made with her confessor's approval.

It occurred to the king that he might succeed if Dymphna were suddenly deprived of the moral support of the aged priest. At once he gave orders for Father Gerebern to be killed.

Confident that Dymphna could now be won over, the king turned his full attention to her, but she still persisted in her determination. Bravely she reminded him of her Christian faith, of her duty to remain true to its teachings. "Nothing, nothing will induce me to offend Jesus Christ."

The king knew he had failed. "You will feel my vengeance," he promised.

The prospect of violent death did not dismay Dymphna. Nor did the death of her confessor shake her resolution. By the grace and power of God, she remained firm. "Father, don't even hope to win my consent. Never will I give in to you."

In his fury the king ordered his men to kill Dymphna. For once they refused to do his bidding. Her gentle qualities of mind and heart were well known to them. They loved the young princess and couldn't bring themselves to harm her.

The king then leaped from his seat and with his own weapon cut off his daughter's head. Dymphna fell at his feet.

Thus Dymphna, barely aged fifteen, died. Her name appears in the Roman Martyrology, together with St. Gerebern's, on May 15.

Gheel, the little market town in the Flemish-speaking region of Belgium, has long been known as a place of pilgrimage for persons seeking the cure or relief of nervous or emotional distresses. In our century, the name of St. Dymphna as the heavenly intercessor for such benefits, is increasingly venerated in America.



Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument
of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me
sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that

I may not so much seek to be

consoled as to console; to be

understood as to understand;

to be loved as to love; for it is

in giving that we receive;

it is in pardoning that we are

pardoned;

and it is in dying that we are

born to eternal life.

Offerings you send in honor of St. Dymphna in petition and in thanksgiving are used among the poor on our Franciscan missions in Central America.

Your charity thus assists the sick and suffering there by supplying food, medicines, the staffing of clinics, and by providing surgical equipment and supplies. Your goodness also makes possible the distribution of vitamins and diet supplements.

The children of the missions, the missionaries, and all their people pray daily in gratitude for your intentions.

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All gifts and offerings will be personally acknowledged by Fr. Bernard, O.F.M.



The St. Dymphna Devotion, as sponsored by Franciscan Mission Associates, includes the following spiritual benefits.

A perpetual novena to St. Dymphna is conducted every Monday evening throughout the year in our seminaries by young men aspiring to the priesthood.

The sacrifice of the Mass is offered each week also for all who take part in this devotion.

A solemn Mass is offered twelve times each year at the principal shrine of St. Dymphna in Gheel, Belgium, the place of the Saint's martyrdom.

A double Novena of Masses in petition and thanksgiving takes place each year in conjunction with the feast of St. Dymphna on May 15.

Your petitions will be included in all our prayers and devotions to invoke the aid of St. Dymphna for

- help in the recovery of anyone who may be so afflicted,
- assistance in times of special emotional stress,
- aid in recovering health of mind and peace of soul for all in need.